

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASUNCI 03277 062324Z

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8032

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3277

STADIS//////////

FOR ASST SECRETARY SHLAUDEMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PA

SUBJ: FUTURE OF MILGP-PARAGUAY

1. I HAVE LEARNED FROM CINCSOUTH THAT DOD HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION CLOSING OUR MILGP BY SEPTEMBER 30, 1976, WITH ONLY A THREE MAN MILITARY RESIDUAL TEAM REMAINING. AS YOU KNOW I HAVE FAVORED CONSISTENTLY THE CLOSING OUT OUR MILGP SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE ENDING OF MAP GRANTS. AS THESE WILL END ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1977, THE MILGP SHOULD REMAIN IN BUSINESS UNTIL THEN.

2. A SKELETON FORCE NOW WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO HANDLE CAPABLY TASKS STILL TO BE COMPLETED BY THE MILGP IN THE PRESENT TRANSITION PERIOD. NOT ONLY MUST THE MILGP CONTINUE TO MANAGE THE MAP GRANTS BUT IT MUST ALSO CARRY OUT THE IMPORTANT AND COMPLEX SWITCH-OVER TO FMS WHICH HAS JUST BEGUN. PROBABLY THE TOUGHEST JOB NOW UNDERWAY IS TO EDUCATE THE PARAGUAYANS TO THE INS AND OUTS OF FMS SINCE THIS IS AN AREA COMPLETELY NEW TO THEM. FOR EXAMPLE THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT HAS JUST NEGOTIATED A MILLION DOLLAR MILITARY ASSISTANCE CREDIT AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING THE MECHANICS OF HOW TO EXPEND IT. ALL THIS WILL TAKE TIME AND CAREFUL GUIDANCE. WE ARE IN FACT WELL INTO THE PROCESS, AT THE SAME TIME GRADUALLY REDUCING OUR PERSONNEL AND MODIFYING THE DUTIES OF THOSE REMAINING, TO MEET THE SEPTEMBER 30, 1977 DEADLINE. IT
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PAGE 02 ASUNCI 03277 062324Z

WOULD IN MY JUDGMENT WRECK THIS PROCESS AND BE DETRIMENTAL TO OUR

OWN INTERESTS TO ADVANCE THE SCHEDULE BY A WHOLE YEAR.

3. THERE WOULD ALSO BE POLITICAL COSTS. THE ABRUPT TERMINATION OF THE MILGP WOULD BE SEEN BY STROESSNER (WHO AS YOU KNOW TAKES A VERY CLOSE INTEREST IN THE MILGP AND MEETS WITH ITS COMMANDER WEEKLY) AS A DELIBERATELY NEGATIVE ACT. MOREOVER HOW WOULD WE EXPLAIN THAT OUR IMMEDIATE CLOSING WAS NOT A COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE BY THE USG OF THE STATEMENTS BROUGHT FORTH BY SOME OF THE EXTREME CRITICS WHO APPEARED AT THE JUST CONCLUDED HEARINGS OF THE FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE, WHO MADE PRECISELY THAT DEMAND?

4. FOR THE FOREGOING REASONS, I TRUST YOU WILL SUPPORT MY VIEW THAT THE TERMINATION DATE FOR OUR MILGP SHOULD REMAIN SEPTEMBER 30, 1977, IN THE EVENT THE DOD STAND HARDENS AND STATE IS ASKED TO TAKE A POSITION ON THIS.

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